

Executive Summary

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) System Review: The central theme for this year's annual report is to provide an initial assessment of the impact of the EMS Strategic Initiatives on the regional system. This focus is distinctive because 2002 marks the completion of the 1998-2003 EMS Strategic Initiatives and it is useful to see what impact these initiatives have had - or will have in the future - on the regional system.

The following characterizes the impact of the Strategic Initiatives on the EMS system:

- The strategic initiatives foster extensive regional participation and strengthen partnerships.
- The initiatives target EMS across the spectrum of service delivery, including prevention, dispatch, Basic Life Support (BLS) services provided by fire departments, paramedic services, and patient transport destination.
- Quality improvement activities in BLS and data gathering have helped provide a blueprint for systems review, and improved the quality of data provided by fire departments and paramedic providers.
- Some of the initiatives have demonstrated that effective regional programs can generate substantial regional savings without increasing administrative costs.

EMS Program and Pilot Project Highlights: The EMS Division is dedicated to increasing survival and reducing disability from out-of-hospital emergencies in King County. This is achieved through strong partnerships with other agencies and innovative leadership in the emergency medical field. All EMS Division programs are designed to contribute to this effort. The following highlights a few of the EMS programs:

- The **Advanced Life Support (ALS) Dispatch Triage Guidelines Revisions project** was implemented to increase the efficiency of the EMS system by reducing the rate of growth of ALS calls and decreasing unnecessary ALS responses. Preliminary results are encouraging and a final evaluation of the impact of the changes on ALS call volume, BLS requests for ALS from scene and ALS Code Green rates will be conducted later this year.
- In 1997, the EMS Division implemented the **Telephone Referral Project (TRP)** as a pilot project, allowing emergency dispatchers to transfer non-urgent callers to a consulting nurse line. As a result of an intensive four-year analysis, the EMS Division concluded the project was safe for patients with a high level of patient satisfaction and an efficient use of EMS resources. In June 2002, the pilot project was incorporated into the EMS Division Emergency Medical Dispatch Program.

Year 2001 Statistics: In Seattle and King County, the Emergency Medical Services system responded to 165,255 calls. Although the population in King County continues to rise, the number of ALS responses decreased in 2001. The majority of incidents resulting in a call to 911 occur in the home.